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ABSTRACT

In three linked but separate essays, this book explores how African-American students experience school in a society that has historically devalued their intellectual abilities. It calls for a new understanding of the unique obstacles black students face in American schools and points to a variety of educational practices that can mitigate those challenges and promote academic excellence. In the first essay, Theresa Perry argues that African-American students face dilemmas, founded in the experience of race and ethnicity in America, that makes the task of achievement distinctive and difficult. The essay discusses an African-American philosophy forged against such obstacles and capable of addressing them by reading African-American narratives. In the second essay, Claude Steele reports empirical psychological evidence that when black students believe they are being judged as members of a stereotyped group they do worse on tests. The subtle psychology of "stereotype threat" is analyzed and the implications of research for education are discussed. The final essay, by Asa Hilliard, argues against a variety of false theories and misguided views of African-American achievement and focuses on actual schools, programs, and teachers around the country that allow African-American students to achieve at high levels. (References are provided for each essay.) (CR)

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